

Abstract 572

TITLE: A Public Health Model for Correctional Health Care

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ISSUE: Traditionally many correctional facilities provide a minimum of necessary care to their inmates and return them to the community with undetected, untreated or under-treated disease which have major consequences not only for the individual, but also for the health of the community as well. This presentation will describe a model of care that provides for early detection, diagnosis, treatment, education, and post-release follow-up and the significant public health benefits that can be realized.

SETTING: Hampden County Correctional Center in Ludlow, Massachusetts, is the largest correctional facility in the state, serving an average daily population of 1,400 inmates.

PROJECT: The Hampden County Correctional Center (HCCC) is an innovative community-based model of correctional health care. Beginning in 1992, HCCC contracted with four community health centers in greater Springfield/Holyoke, Massachusetts, to provide inmates with medical and case management services. This community-integrated model started by providing continuity of care to inmates with HIV/AIDS and other serious illnesses before, during, and after incarceration.

RESULTS: Preliminary data suggest that the program is effective in providing ongoing health care and risk reduction education and in reducing recidivism rates. The model implemented to date has had a very reasonable cost, representing approximately 9% of the overall budget of the correctional facility. Furthermore, inmates who participate in the program are less likely to recidivate and are more likely to be seen at community health care centers.

LESSONS LEARNED: Evidence from this project suggests that health care provided in a correctional setting should not only be comprehensive, but also continuous upon release into the community in order to facilitate reintegration and prevent recidivism. To support this continuity of care model, many key players need to be at the table, including the court, corrections, the health department, substance abuse, mental health, academia, community-based organizations, volunteer agencies, and the community.

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